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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/687,474	10/14/2003	Shahla C. Cisneros	PD-203019	8877
20991 7590 01/03/2008 THE DIRECTV GROUP, INC. PATENT DOCKET ADMINISTRATION CA / LA1 / A109 P O BOX 956 EL SEGUNDO, CA 90245-0956			EXAMINER BOND, CHRISTOPHER H	
			ART UNIT 3714	PAPER NUMBER
			MAIL DATE 01/03/2008	DELIVERY MODE PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/687,474

Applicant(s)

CISNEROS ET AL.

Examiner

Christopher H. Bond

Art Unit

3714

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 20 July 2007.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-14 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-14 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 14 October 2003 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on July 20, 2007 has been entered. Claims 1 and 8 have been amended. Currently, claims 1-14 are pending in the current application.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

1. **Claim 8 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over NTN Communications Inc 10-K SEC Filing of March 6, 2002 (NTN).**

2. NTN discloses (page 2), "The NTN Network is North America's largest...interactive television network. [The]...network broadcasts a variety of interactive multi-player sports and trivia games...365 days per year..." (equivalent to applicant's limitation of interactive gaming). NTN further discloses (page 4), "[NTN network]...develop[s] and produce[s] original programming at our facilities...for distribution to our sites...We can provide simultaneous transmission of up to 16 live events for interactive play and a multitude of interactive games and other programs,

allowing distribution of different programs to customers in different geographical locations" (equivalent to applicant's limitation of a central broadcast center over a first communications network and a game system residing within the central broadcast center). NTN further discloses (page 4) that they, "...use either satellite or Internet service providers to distribute our programming to our customers" (equivalent to applicant's limitation of having a plurality of users who access the gaming system via the first communications network). NTN discloses (page 3), "The NTN Network features games licensed pursuant to a perpetual non-exclusive license agreement from Buzztime. [They]...generally broadcast premium trivia competitions ... and live interactive sports-oriented play-along games..." (equivalent to applicant's limitation of providing a plurality of games accessible through the gaming system). NTN then discloses (page 3), "The NTN Network's interactive programming permits players to compete in real-time within each location and to be ranked against players in all locations throughout North America. At the conclusion of each game broadcast, players' scores are calculated and top scores are sent via phone lines to our broadcast center...Within minutes, rankings for each location are tabulated and displayed and rankings and scores for the top locations are transmitted back to all locations via the NTN Network for display" (equivalent to applicant's limitation of a scoring protocol where scoring is provided in real-time back to the gaming system via a second communication network).

3. In regards to the applicant's amended claim of having the gaming application and plurality of games stored on the set top box, NTN's SEC filing also meets this argument

(page 9, last paragraph) in stating that, "...competition within the interactive television space comes from three or four existing game providers that are also seeking to provide games on digital set top boxes, either as single play or networked games...most of these competitors can only offer stand-alone single player games on current set-tops. Thus, a stand-alone game would not require a network, and as such would require that the game and gaming application be located at the receiver—in this case, the set top box.

4. This is evidence that the teaching and motivation for storing games and gaming applications on the set-top existed at the time the invention was made. In this case, the applicant is substituting a known prior art element--that is, storing a plurality of games and a gaming application on a set top box--for another--i.e. NTN's live game broadcast to the set top box, to yield predictable results.

5. Moreover, the additional limitations of having a plurality of games accessible at a time elected by a user of the gaming application would have been obvious. NTN's reference teaches a plurality of live games that are broadcast. The NTN reference does not suggest that users cannot play games whenever they choose--yet rather, may have to wait to join in a game. One skilled in the art would recognize, given the limitations disclosed by the applicant, that there would be a degree of latency in regards to 'a time elected by a user' in the applicants' invention--namely, the transmitting of the gaming application over a first communications network and the submitting of user identification--necessary for setting up a scoring protocol--would necessitate that a user must wait before playing a game.

6. **Claims 9-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over NTN in view of Walker et al., USPAT 5,779,549 (Walker) and further in view of Weitz, US PUB 2003/0171148 (Weitz).**

7. In regards to claim 9, NTN discloses (page 3), "The NTN Network features games licensed pursuant to a perpetual non-exclusive license agreement from Buzztime. [They]...generally broadcast premium trivia competitions ... and live interactive sports-oriented play-along games..." (equivalent to applicant's limitation of having a gaming application associated with each of the plurality of games). NTN further discloses (page 4) that, "...[their] facilities are equipped with video, satellite and communications equipment, and...multimedia site server computers" (equivalent to applicant's uplink server). NTN also discloses (page 5), "Game servers...[used] to execute the games..." It's obvious these servers would serve as an uplink server to transmit content from their production studio game servers to the players. NTN however, fails to explicitly disclose any information regarding the question database, a scoring database, as well as any information regarding a real-time update server. NTN also discloses (page 5) that the game servers, "execute the games and collect user statistics..."

8. Walker discloses (column 10, lines 50-54) that, "Linked to the tournament database would be a database devoted to storing questions and answers, from which trivia tournaments would extract questions." He further discloses, (column 12, line 24), "Databases of...scores..."

9. The advantage of using a database, Walker writes (column 10, lines 60-67), is that, "...[the] last database field is especially important given the time and expense associated with creating questions and answers, since the re-use of some questions is almost inevitable. While tournament organizers obviously do not want to have players seeing questions for the second time, they also do not want to throw out a question that only a small percentage of potential tournament participants have seen. Databases provide the best compromise...". The advantage of using a score database, Walker writes (column 12, lines 24-25), is to, "...allow [players]...to check the comparability of their scores."

10. This is evidence that one of ordinary skill in the art would find a reason/motivation/suggestion to use a question database to help eliminate the time and expense of generating questions, to prevent the re-use of question, and to prevent the loss of questions as well as using a score database to allow players to compare their scores.

11. Therefore, it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the invention of NTN by implementing the question and score databases as described by Walker for the purpose of eliminating the time and expense associated with generating questions, to prevent the re-use of questions, and to prevent the loss of questions, and to allow players to compare their scores.

12. Still lacking is the limitation such as the real-time update server where the real-time update server receives and transmits data.

13. Weitz discloses, (paragraph [0011]), "...a plurality of...servers, receiving real-time updates from the...source, and using the cross-broadcast real-time upload means to choose at least one of the...servers and to upload the real-time updates to the chosen...server(s)..."

14. The advantage of using real-time update servers, Weitz writes, (paragraph [0007]) is, "...to have real-time online communication between the application running on the set-top box (e.g. a game) and the headend."

15. This is evidence that one of ordinary skill in the art would find a reason/motivation/suggestion to use real-time update servers for real-time communications between the STB and the headend.

16. Therefore, it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the invention of NTN when modified by Walker with the real-time update server as described by Weitz for the purpose of providing real-time communication between the STB and the headend.

17. As to claims 10 and 11, NTN discloses (page 2-3) that, "Each subscribing hospitality location is furnished with...proprietary equipment, including a customized site server computer, a satellite data-receiving unit, and an average of 14 Playmakers, which players use to enter their game play selections" (this is equivalent to the applicant's limitation of having a user reception device that receives signals from the uplink server). Signals are received via satellite, and as previously mentioned, signals are sent to the broadcast center via phone lines, which meets the applicant's limitation of transmitting signals to the gaming system via a second communications network.

NTN's interactive content is distributed to the data receiving unit (applicant's reception device) which has access to the game server (applicant's question database). NTN further discloses (page 2) that, "Patrons use our hand-held wireless Playmaker devices to interact with trivia and sports games displayed on television screens in the hospitality location," and further discloses (page 2), "The...Playmakers also feature a larger, eight line LCD screen that displays sports scores and other ticker information and enable electronic, text-based chat between patrons" (equivalent to applicant's limitation of having a user input device that receives signals from the reception device and is capable of transmitting signals to the reception device).

18. Claims 1, 2, 12 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C 103(a) as being unpatentable over NTN in view of Junkin, USPAT 6,193,610 (Junkin).

19. What is disclosed in NTN is discussed above and incorporated herein.

20. NTN also discloses (page 5), "Web servers...used to connect the user to our web sites...[and] Login and registration servers...[that] allow a user to register and/or log in to our web sites" (equivalent to applicant's limitation of submitting user identification). NTN further discloses (page 7) "Countdown", one of their interactive trivia games.

Countdown is one of NTN's longest-running trivia games, and it is well known by people familiar with the art, that Countdown uses a time-based scoring component. The game uses 15 questions, each with five possible answers, on a variety of topics. Players can earn up to 1,000 points per question based on how fast they answer; the number of points decrease as time passes. Clues are given to help the player eliminate incorrect

choices, with the third clue usually alluding to what the correct answer is. The answer is given once time runs out. A score of 15,000 is considered a "perfect" score.

21. However, NTN fails to explicitly disclose a bonus score component or different skill levels.

22. Junkin discloses (column 7, 35-39) that, "The player score calculation may provide for the weighting of certain statistics depending on the importance, difficulty or occurrence rate of each statistic. In addition, the player score may be uniquely tailored to accommodate a particular event. Junkin further discloses, (column 11, lines 17-24) that, "...a certain skill factor is involved...The menu...allows the participant to be involved in different levels of the interactive game. There may be a beginners level, intermediate level and advanced level."

23. The advantage of using bonus scoring and different skill levels, Junkin writes, (column 1, lines 33-44) is, "...increasing the enjoyment of an interactive game...[and] increasing the level of skill and knowledge of a participant..."

24. This is evidence that one of ordinary skill in the art would have reason/motivation/suggestion to use bonus scoring and different skill levels in an interactive television gaming system for the increasing enjoyment, skill level, and knowledge of the participant.

25. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the invention of NTN with the bonus scoring and different skill level component as described by Junkin for the purpose of increasing the enjoyment, skill level, and knowledge of the participant.

26. Further, the method of interactive gaming and method of calculating a time based component disclosed by the applicant merely discloses the steps of the interactive gaming devices operation, and since each element must be implemented in order to make the device, the method would have at least been obvious in view of the device.

27. In regards to the applicant's amended claim of having the gaming application and plurality of games stored on the set top box, NTN's SEC filing also meets this argument (page 9, last paragraph) in stating that, "...competition within the interactive television space comes from three or four existing game providers that are also seeking to provide games on digital set top boxes, either as single play or networked games...most of these competitors can only offer stand-alone single player games on current set-tops. Thus, a stand-alone game would not require a network, and as such would require that the game and gaming application be located at the receiver—in this case, the set top box.

28. This is evidence that the teaching and motivation for storing games and gaming applications on the set-top existed at the time the invention was made. In this case, the applicant is substituting a known prior art element--that is, storing a plurality of games and a gaming application on a set top box--for another--i.e. NTN's live game broadcast to the set top box, to yield predictable results.

29. Moreover, the additional limitations of having a plurality of games accessible at a time elected by a user of the gaming application would have been obvious. NTN's reference teaches a plurality of live games that are broadcast. The NTN reference does not suggest that users cannot play games whenever they choose--yet rather, may have

to wait to join in a game. One skilled in the art would recognize, given the limitations disclosed by the applicant, that there would be a degree of latency in regards to 'a time elected by a user' in the applicants' invention--namely, the transmitting of the gaming application over a first communications network and the submitting of user identification--necessary for setting up a scoring protocol--would necessitate that a user must wait before playing a game.

30. Claims 4-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over NTN in view of Junkin, and further in view of Walker.

31. In regards to claims 4-7, the method of initiating a game, generating a plurality of questions, initiating a question/answer sequence, and managing the questions, as disclosed by the applicant, merely discloses the steps of performing these functions, and since each element must be implemented in order to make the device, the method would have been obvious in view of the device.

32. NTN when modified by Junkin fails to explicitly disclose any information regarding the question database, a scoring database, as well as any information regarding a real-time update server. NTN also discloses (page 5) that the game servers, "execute the games and collect user statistics...")

33. Walker discloses (column 10, lines 50-54) that, "Linked to the tournament database would be a database devoted to storing questions and answers, from which trivia tournaments would extract questions." He further discloses, (column 12, line 24), "Databases of...scores..."

34. The advantage of using a database, Walker writes (column 10, lines 60-67), is that, "...[the] last database field is especially important given the time and expense associated with creating questions and answers, since the re-use of some questions is almost inevitable. While tournament organizers obviously do not want to have players seeing questions for the second time, they also do not want to throw out a question that only a small percentage of potential tournament participants have seen. Databases provide the best compromise...". The advantage of using a score database, Walker writes (column 12, lines 24-25), is to, "...allow [players]...to check the comparability of their scores."

35. This is evidence that one of ordinary skill in the art would find a reason/motivation/suggestion to use a question database to help eliminate the time and expense of generating questions, to prevent the re-use of question, and to prevent the loss of questions, as well as using a score database to allow players to compare their scores.

36. Therefore, it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the invention of NTN by implementing the question and score databases as described by Walker for the purpose of eliminating the time and expense associated with generating questions, to prevent the re-use of questions, and to prevent the loss of questions, and to allow players to compare their scores.

37. **Claims 3 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over NTN in view of Junkin, and further in view of Crockett et al., US PUB 2004/0039631, (Crockett).**

38. NTN's invention when viewed in conjunction with Junkin discloses bonus scoring, but does not explicitly disclose the bonus score components.

39. Crocket discloses (pages 3-4, paragraph [0038]), "...[a] weighted score is calculated by multiplying the...weighted score...by the ratio of the...score over the maximum possible...score."

40. The advantage of calculating the bonus score in this way, Crockett states (page 1, paragraph [0004]), "...enable[s] an organization to attract, retain, and develop desired customers and optimize the value of each of these customer relationships."

41. This is evidence that one of ordinary skill in the art would have reason/motivation/suggestion to use these components in calculating the bonus score in an interactive television gaming system for the purpose of attracting, retaining, and developing customers.

42. Therefore, it would be obvious to anyone of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify NTN when modified by Junkin with the bonus score component as claimed for the purpose of customer attraction, retention and development, as suggested by Crockett.

43. As per claim 3 the method of calculating a bonus score component disclosed by the applicant merely discloses the steps of the interactive gaming device's operation, and since each element must be implemented in order to make the device, the method would have been obvious in view of the device.

Citation of Pertinent Prior Art

44. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure: Cairo, GB 2,422,558A; Lawrence et al., US PUB 2001/0034269; Neal, III, US PUB 2001/0036865; Lemmons et al., US PUB 2002/0034980; Ubale et al., US PUB 2002/0042293; Thomas et al., US PUB 2002/0042920; Wistendahl et al., US PUB 2002/0056136; Markel, US PUB 2002/0133817; Easley et al., US PUB 2002/0142842; Shoff et al., US PUB 2005/0015815; Jordan et al., US PUB 2007/0004516; Lappington et al., US PAT 5,638,113 and US PAT 5,734,413; Stoel et al., US PAT 5,641,319 and US PAT 5,675,828; Fennell, Jr. et al., US PAT 5,695,400; Vuong et al., US PAT 5,762,552; Stoel et al., US PAT 5,907,715; Goldberg et al., US PAT 6,183,366, US PAT 6,264,560, and US PAT 6,712,702; Lawrence et al., US PAT 6,264,559 and US PAT 6,692,358; Galyean, III et al., US PAT 6,447,396; Zucker et al., US PAT 6,468,155; Di Cesare, US PAT 6,800,031; Jordan et al., US PAT 6,840,861; Willis, US PAT 6,863,612; Eck et al., US PAT 6,884,171; Rowe, US PAT 7,303,473; Stessel, WO 03/012624 A1—as these all relate to interactive gaming systems.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Christopher H. Bond whose telephone number is (571) 272-9760. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 9:30am - 6pm (Eastern Standard Time).

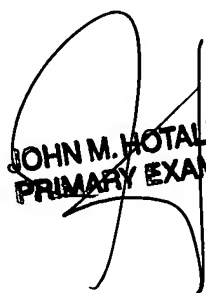
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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Xuan M. Thai can be reached on (571) 272-7147. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

Chris Bond


JOHN M. NOTALING, II
PRIMARY EXAMINER